1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

631 life and each could be taken as a unit complete in itself. Individual studies and comparisons of one with another would provide much valuable material. Familiarity with individuals and groups belonging [784] to all the major tribal groups, and study of their folk-lore and customs has led me to conclude that as in language, so in social structure and in culture, the differences are of small account. In offering illustrative material, I shall give its tribal source.

The King

643 To describe the royal office and functions it would be necessary 177 to use the past tense. That reason, along with others, leads me to exclude this subject from the present study. Effective European occupation of the country and government by direct rule[1] have atrophied the royal office among the Ovimbundu until to-day kings survive as hardly more than living museum pieces. This being the case, I shall only enumerate the royal functions, very briefly characterize them, and pass on to describe other and living parts of the Umbundu social organism.

643 The principal functions of the royal office were:

776 1. *Religious.* The spirits of the king's ancestors were the principal national deities. The king was not only high priest but [778] also the visible vice-regent and incarnation of the spirits. The sacrifices at the royal shrine, *kakokoto* (literally, at the skulls), the place of the royal skulls, were for the nation in order:

643 (*a*) *To control the elements*, i.e. to ensure a sufficient supply of 372 rain and avoid the dangers caused by hail, by lightning, &c. Also 789 to control fire by providing a new fire properly (ceremonially) kindled from which everyone took his fire. A king's reign was spoken of as 'during the Water of Lord So-and-so' (*Kovava a Ñalā Ngandi*), or 'during the Fire of Lord So-and-so' (*Kondalu ya Ñalā Ngandi*).

241 (*b*) *To ensure fertility*, toward which desideratum the royal ● 644 marriage had great influence. The queen's special province was [782] agriculture and her kitchen was sanctified by human sacrifice to guarantee the national food supply. Ceremonially treated seed was distributed to be mixed with the seed of each granary.

[1] 'Direct rule' is applied in most parts of Africa where European settlement is the predominant consideration and also where centralized government is the ideal. 'Indirect rule' is best illustrated in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanganyika Territory.

regent and incarnation" of the spirits. Sacrifices were made at the royal shrine or *kakokoto* ("at the skulls"), where the skulls of past chiefs were kept, in order to:-

(i) control the elements i.e. to ensure a sufficient supply of rain and avoid the dangers caused by storms; also to control fire by providing a new fire ceremonially kindled[1] from which everyone took his fire.

(ii) to ensure fertility, towards which the royal marriage had great influence. The queen's special province was agriculture and her kitchen was sanctified by human sacrifice to guarantee the national food supply. Ceremonially treated seed was distributed to be mixed with the seed of each granary.

(b) *To represent the country in its external relations*, principally to make trade agreements with other chiefs, or to make war on other peoples in order to get tribute and plunder. The war leader *(Kesongo)* has his own residence entirely separate from that of the king, whom he must not meet face to face except on certain ceremonial occasions.[2] Each king must inaugurate his reign with a war, during which or after which he must ceremonially "eat the old one" *(oku lia ekongo)* - who was usually a specially fattened slave cooked with the flesh of the principal animals commonly eaten.[3]

(c) *To dispense justice.* The chief's court or *olusenje* was the supreme court of the chiefdom. The chief had the final word in any case, but most chiefs acted according to custom.

(d) *To protect himself and the chiefdom*, the chief could use "magic" (?) which might have been accounted witchcraft or murder if practised without authority: e.g. the ritual murder of a pregnant woman, or of the children whose lives were required for building and furnishing the queen's kitchen.

(e) The chief made much use of divination in order to carry out his office. For this purpose he had his own diviner *(citue cosoma)*, who was of the blood royal; but he also consulted diviners of other regions and types.

Succession to chiefship is in the male line,[4] from father to son, elder brother to younger brother or brother's son, or sometimes to one more distantly related. The election is made by the councillors whose duty it is (?), ordinarily before the old chief's death is announced. These same councillors may depose an unpopular chief, and there have been many such depositions. This "democratic" tendency of the Ovimbundu has been noted by most writers. Childs points out that it is attested by the fact that a chief (formerly as well as today) works in his own fields, and by folk-tales which give incidental and intimate pictures of petty details in the lives of the chiefs†

(1) See above, p.26.
(2) In Bailundu he, with certain other officials, was of the stock of slaves of the state *(ovindili viosoma)*.
(3) Childs, p.21. Many early writers refer to the cannibalism of the "Jagas" or "Imbangalas" who are thought to have been the Ovimbundu chiefs. (See above, p.8, and also Lacerda and Ravenstein, quoted by Childs, pp.17ff.)
(4) But *inheritance* is said to follow a different line among chiefs from among commoners; possibly inheritance is also in the paternal line. See Childs p.18.

† See footnote 1, p. 31

361 At the present time one type of village is surrounded by stout stakes ten or more feet high set in a roughly circular plan. The arrangement of alleyways within the village is complicated without following any symmetrical plan. A visitor sees only a labyrinth of passages between high poles, with here and there a rectangular wooden 417 gate at intervals along the passages. The door itself is made from 335 four stout heavy planks which are roughly hewn and as a rule undecorated, but occasionally I have seen the panels of a door carved with [531] designs representing the breasts of a woman; or there may have been simple geometrical patterns. The top ends of the door panels are massive spheres of wood bored through with holes. Through the holes in the tops of these panels a pintle is passed in such a way that the door is suspended from above. During the daytime the lower ends of the panels are raised to the level of the lintel. They are there supported on a Y-shaped upright which is erected in front of the doorway. At night the planks are removed from this support and allowed to hang downward in the doorway. There is a sliding crosspiece to push over the lower ends. The same arrangement is sometimes used to make a door for a hut. This old type of village doorway, common twenty years ago, is becoming increasingly rare.

342 The house of a king or a chief is larger than that of a commoner. 644 The enclosure which contains a king's house and the other buildings 621 is named *elombe*, while *epandavailo* is the word used to describe the entrance to this compound. The *elombe* is built by men and women who receive no payment. There is a ceremony when the compound is opened. The house of the chief, Kandimba Sanjahulu, near Bailundu, is rectangular, with mud walls raised on a platform of earth and stones. Whitewash has been applied to the outside of the walls and some ornament is given in the form of painted blue crosses. [113] Complete study of structural types and the planning of internal divisions has been made by F. and W. Jaspert, of the Städtisches Völkermuseum, Frankfort.

644 At a village near Cuma the house of the chief differed from the dwellings of commoners in being somewhat larger. The house had been abandoned, not because the chief died there, but because the chieftainship had been transferred to an adjacent village. The tomb, which will be described in connection with funeral rites, was a few yards from the house. This mausoleum was surrounded by a high wooden palisade, to a stake of which were attached the horns of an ox killed at the funeral feast, while the jawbone lay in the enclosure

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

(Plate XLV, Fig. 2). The house of bows for holding sacred relics will be described in connection with religion (Plate XLVI, Fig. 1).

In former days there used to be a hard mud floor for dancing, centrally placed in the village.

In the center of the village is the communal house where all men, and boys over four years of age, gather to eat their food, which is sent by the women. This *onjango* is the place of assembly for discussion of village affairs. A house of this kind at Bailundu is circular in form with a diameter of seventeen feet (Plate XLVIII, Fig. 1). In the middle of the *onjango* are stones forming a fireplace. In another such house there were jawbones of oxen. These were suspended from the walls as tokens of the payment of fines. There is no communal house for females. In some villages there is a common kraal for cattle.

The king's compound usually contains:

(1) The king's house, which invariably has a separate sleeping room.

(2) A house and kitchen for each of his wives.

(3) A tomb for the burial of kings and their wives.

(4) The house of bows for staffs, bows, mats, and tobacco-pipes of dead chiefs.

(5) A house of meditation for the king (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 1).

(6) Pens for pigs and chickens.

The guest houses (Plate XLVIII, Fig. 2) that I have seen were not in the king's compound. Granaries, which are conspicuous in every village, have been mentioned in connection with food supply (Plate XLIV, Fig. 1). Each house has its own granary. I have noticed garbage pits containing corn husks and refuse from sweet potatoes, but there is as a rule no organized scheme for disposing of refuse; dogs and pigs are the scavengers. There is no particular place for defecation; people use the bush.

Every man has a knowledge of house-building. Women do not actually build, but, along with the children, they pour water into the clay pit and carry clay to the men who are plastering the walls. Ngonga says, "People would be surprised to see a woman building a house. They would call her a he-woman." Men help one another in house-building by giving reciprocal service for which there is a gift of food and beer.

A deep rectangular clay pit is made as close to the house as possible, and the children thoroughly enjoy puddling the clay with their

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

338 feet. A trench about eighteen inches deep is dug for the poles (*akoso*), which form the framework. The wattle work is tied to the uprights with strong strips of red bark before the plastering is begun.
341 The old type of Umbundu house was round, but most of the houses
171 now show a transition to square or rectangular forms (Plate XLIV, Fig. 2).

[531] Exterior wall-painting is found only in the northern districts of Angola (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 2). Between Saurimo and Malange in the north, rectangular, painted houses are frequently seen. Wall-painting is a cultural trait from the Congo region where that form of decoration is common.

796
621 The method of forming a village site and the right of the chief to allot land have been described. The house of the chief is the first to be erected. There is drinking of beer to celebrate the completion of the village, and the pots of beer have to be stirred with the claws of chickens; these have been killed to provide blood for sprinkling the walls of the new houses. Village chiefs go through the process of stirring and drinking. The medicine-man drinks first, then he offers the cup to the chief.

344
476 The communal house is built by the united efforts of all men of the village. Ngonga says, "The king never helps with any of the
[485] building, but he talks very much." The guest house is also built
644 by communal labor. The king of the *ombala* of Ngalangi told me that a king always uses the house of his predecessor, which must not be pulled down. No repairs are permitted and the house is used until it is absolutely untenable.

354
342 The interior of a commoner's house has three hearth stones in the middle of the floor, which is of hard mud beaten down with a heavy wooden implement called *ocikandulo*. The ceremonial placing of the stones has been described in discussing marriage. There is no chimney, consequently the walls and roof are blackened with smoke. The junction of roof and walls provides pockets for the reception of small articles. On the floor near the walls may be several large beer pots. The dark smoky interior is almost intolerable. The sleeping
352 room is sometimes separated from the living room by matting. The bed is made from a cross-work of sticks supported on four Y-shaped posts, one at each corner. On the bed are coarse sleeping mats and possibly a modern blanket.

356
252 The miscellaneous contents of the hut are gourds, dippers, cooking pots of several sizes, pounders, and baskets. In many of the huts I found cooking going on in the general room, but frequently a sepa-

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1911]

THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

178 The great distinguishing mark of the Ovimbundu was their participation in the caravan trade. Some of the neighbouring people also engaged in trading journeys (e.g. the Chokwe) but in central Angola the dominant traders were the Ovimbundu by reason of their control of the routes to Benguela and Catumbela, a control which as Livingstone's narrative shows they tried for a while to turn into a monopoly.[43] With this must be linked 177 the greater readiness of the Ovimbundu to adopt European ways, marked by the general adoption of cloths for wear by at latest the mid-nineteenth century.[44]

3. *Economics and Social Structure*

101 This section will describe the economic life and social structure which marked the period of the rubber trade (1874–1911). 436 A genuine currency existed in the form of cloth, and fortunes 439 could be made in it. Serpa Pinto tells us of one Otjimbundu who made £3,500 by trading in the interior and that he had met many men who 'turned over capital of a thousand to twelve hundred pounds sterling',[45] presumably in trade goods since Portuguese currency did not circulate among the Ovim- 361 bundu. At the capitals of the kingdoms genuine towns grew up. Magyar in the middle of the nineteenth century estimated that [162] 5,000 people lived at Bailundo[46] and the British explorer Cameron who had crossed Africa from Zanzibar says of Ekovongo, the capital of Bie, 'the town of Kagnombe, the largest I came across during my whole journey, being more than three miles in circumference. On arrival I was met by the 344 Kagnombe's secretary, chamberlain, and captain of the guard who wore red waistcoats as a sign of their dignity. The secretary was more ornamental than useful, being unable to write, but a subordinate, a black man and native of Dondo, was better educated and conducted the trade of Kagnombe with the coast'.[47]

[43] Ibid., p. 203.
[44] Ibid., p. 206, referring to Magyar as evidence.
[45] Serpa Pinto, pp. 161–2.
[46] Magyar, p. 391.
[47] V. L. Cameron, *Across Africa*, London, 1877. Vol. II, pp. 206–7.